

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2195

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to state academic standards.

Brief Description: Regarding state assessment standards.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representatives McDermott, Talcott, Quall, Tom and Haigh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/5/03 [DPS];

Appropriations: 3/8/03 [DPS(ED)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/17/03, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/17/03, 40-7.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to review and prioritize the essential academic learning requirements and identify, for teachers and parents, the grade level content expectations that will be included on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).
- Directs SPI to report the results on the reading and mathematics WASLs in a format that will allow parents and teachers to determine the academic gain a student has acquired in those subjects from one school year to the next.
- Requires SPI to report on a series of issues related to state academic standards.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; McDermott, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Tom, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Cox, McMahan, Rockefeller and Santos.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Haigh and

Hunter.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill by Committee on Education be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 22 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Sehlin, Ranking Minority Member; Pearson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Boldt, Buck, Clements, Cody, Cox, DeBolt, Grant, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, McDonald, Miloscia, Pflug, Ruderman, Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Conway, Dunshee, Linville, McIntire and Schual-Berke.

Staff: Denise Graham (786-7137).

Background:

Under current law, Washington has or is in the process of developing or refining essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) in reading, writing, communications (listening), mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. The state has developed assessments to see whether students have learned the EALRs in reading, writing, listening, mathematics and science. It is in the process of developing state assessments in social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. Together, these assessments comprise the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). The WASL is administered to public school students in the fourth, seventh, and tenth grades. It is used as a measure to determine whether schools are teaching children the knowledge and skills required to meet the state's academic standards in the assessed subjects. Currently, students are not held accountable for the results of these assessments. However, beginning with the graduating class of 2008, public high school students will be required to successfully pass the high school WASL in reading, writing, mathematics and listening in order to graduate.

Beginning in 1998 the Legislature set improvement goals into law for student performance on the fourth grade reading WASL. In 1999 the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission (A+ Commission) was created and given the authority to adopt or revise academic improvement goals for fourth and seventh grade and high school in reading, writing, mathematics and science, as measured by the WASL. In 2002 the law was revised to give the A+ Commission additional authority to adopt goals that eliminate the achievement gap and improve high school graduation rates. Although there are no consequences attached to the goals, school and school district progress toward the

goals is reported to parents, the community and the state.

In late 2001 Congress passed the "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001." The act requires every state to assess students in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades three through eight, and once in high school. It also requires schools and districts to get every child to state standards in those subjects by 2013-2014. The legislation describes a formula for getting children to the standards. The formula is called "adequate yearly progress" (AYP). The federal law describes consequences for schools that use federal Title I funds but fail over several years to meet AYP.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

Essential Academic Learning Requirements and Grade Level Content Expectations

The Superintendent of Public Instruction will review and prioritize the essential academic learning requirements. SPI will identify and describe the grade level content expectations to be assessed on the WASL. These efforts will result in more focus and targeting, with an emphasis of depth over breadth in the number of expectations assessed at each grade level. The expectations will be coordinated over the grades sequentially and logically, and will build with increasing depth after a student has acquired foundational skills and knowledge.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning

By 2005 SPI will report WASL results only for students who have been continuously enrolled from October 1st to the testing period, to the extent that the reporting period is permitted by federal law.

By September 2006, WASL results for reading and mathematics will be reported to parents and teachers in a format that shows the amount of academic gain a student has acquired in those subjects from one school year to the next.

SPI will provide parents and teachers with as much student performance information as possible within the constraints of the assessment system's item bank. SPI will also provide information on class-room based and other assessments that may provide additional achievement information for individual students.

Reports Required

A series of reports on the EALRs and assessments are required of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). The reports will be submitted to the Governor, the State Board of Education (SBE), and the House and Senate Education

Committees. The OSPI will report as follows:

1. By December 1, 2003, with recommendations on the design, administration, scoring, and reporting of assessments for social studies, the arts, and health and fitness.
2. By May 1, 2004, on its review, prioritization and identification of the EALRs and grade level content expectations and, subject to funding, on a technical review of the reading, writing, and science WASLs; and
3. By November 30, 2004, on the feasibility of returning assessments in the same school year in which the assessments are administered.

In addition, by November 30, 2006, the A+ Commission will report on its review and adjustment of cut scores for the WASL. The report will include a schedule for the regular review and adjustment of those scores.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

Provides a timeline for the review and prioritization of the EALRs: Reading, writing, math and science by 2004; social studies by 2005; the arts by 2006; and health and fitness by 2007. Directs SPI to develop high school level assessments for social studies and describes the assessments as locally scored with results reported to SPI. Also directs SPI to post on its website model class-room based assessments that may be used by school districts for the arts and health and fitness. Directs the return of the high school mathematics WASL by June 1 of each year, beginning with 2006, subject to available. Deletes the requirement to report only students who are continuously enrolled and changes the term "cut score" to "student performance scores." Delays any changes to the scores until after the end of the subsequent legislative session to give the legislature time to take action if action is deemed warranted. Repeals RCW 28A.655.060 and adds language from that statute that is not already duplicated elsewhere, except for the requirement for SBE to determine validity and reliability of the high school assessment system and one sentence addressing educational pathways.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on June 30, 2003. However, the bill is null and void if not funded in the budget.

Testimony For: (Education) This legislation creates a set of principles to underpin the state's academic standards. It will provide students, parents, and educators with a better understanding of the state's assessment system. It will allow parents and teachers to see how much a student has learned in reading and math over the course of a year. It will

also give educators more of the tools they need to raise children to state standards by making sure they know which EALRs and grade level content expectations will be assessed on the WASL. It will also make sure that teachers and parents are given more information on the areas where students performed well or poorly on the assessments. It promotes academic focus, emphasizes depth over breadth, requires an examination of the cut score for state assessments, and aligns state and federal reporting requirements. The legislation is a work in progress.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) This is a big policy bill. It makes it very clear in less than three pages what is expected of our students and teachers. The provisions of the bill will help teachers help their students by providing clear, targeted goals that are articulated logically and sequentially. Teachers will know what is tested on the WASL and how to help students who fail.

Testimony Against: (Education) Passage of this legislation may well lead to confusion among educators. It will cost money and may well send the wrong signal to educators about whether the state plans to "stay the course" on education reform. The OSPI promises to implement many of the elements of the legislation, but does not wish to see the elements included in law. Including some of the principles in law may have unintended consequences in future years. The state is making progress toward reform without this legislation, so it is unnecessary.

(With concerns) An existing law is included in the legislation that describes the timelines for state assessments; the inclusion of that section may raise concerns among teachers in subjects that are not yet assessed. Any change to state academic standards should be carefully considered using a deliberate pace and this bill was introduced very recently. The legislature needs to be very careful about the messages it sends on academic standards so that teachers are not confused about the legislature's commitment to education reform.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Education) (In support) Representative McDermott, prime sponsor; and Joanne McCann, Citizens United for Responsible Education; and Ann Randall, Washington Education Association.

(With concerns) Steve Mullin, Washington Roundtable; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

(Opposed) Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; Bob Butts, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Judy Hartmann, Governor's Office.

Testified: (Appropriations) Rich Ham, Washington Education Association; Bob Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Representative Talcott, prime sponsor;

and Ann Randall, Washington Education Association